UNEQUAL DIALOGUE VS. UNBALANCED MONOLOGUE:

US CIVIL-MILITARY RELATIONS AND STRATEGIC PLANNING IN IRAQ

BY

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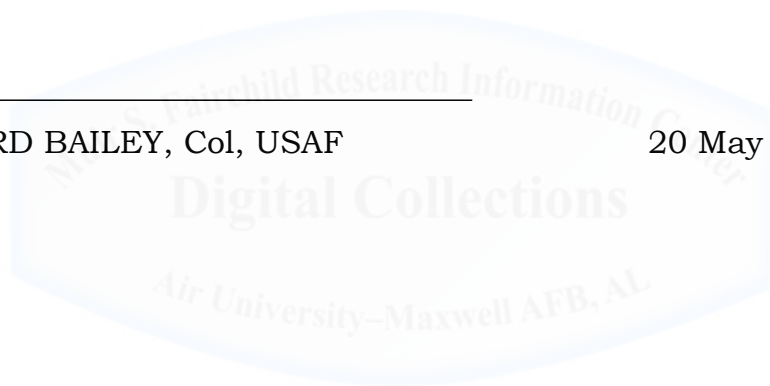
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APPROVAL

The undersigned certify that this thesis meets master's-level standards of research, argumentation, and expression.

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DISCLAIMER

The conclusions and opinions expressed in this document are those of the author. They do not reflect the official position of the US government, Department of Defense, the United States Air Force, or Air University.

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ABSTRACT

This study comprises an analysis of the 2003 US led Iraq invasion from a civil-military relations perspective. It argues that many of the problems the United States encountered after early successes in Iraq stemmed from a dysfunctional interaction between civilian and military leaders. In particular, US failures in the aftermath of the 2003 invasion were largely due to the Bush administration's inability to comprehend the value of dissenting ideas and opposing views of thought emanating from within the military establishment. In making this argument, the thesis takes a contrasting view from the widely acclaimed civil-military theorist Eliot Cohen. In his seminal book *Supreme Command*, Cohen introduces the concept of "unequal dialogue" as the benchmark of effective civil-military relations during times of war. While referencing the US invasion of Iraq in 2003, Cohen claims Secretary Rumsfeld effectively utilized unequal dialogue and thus won his war. This thesis shows that Cohen was right about winning the tactical battle; however, Cohen was wrong about the US achieving strategic victory. In addition, Cohen was also wrong in his affirmation of the Bush administration's use of his own theory. The Bush administration only applied one-half of the theory's requirement, the statesman's right to probe into military operations. Secretary Rumsfeld's inability to value the second part, the unequal dialogue itself, restricted his ability to maximize strategic decision-making. Because Cohen's two part-theory is not mutually exclusive, utilizing one-half in isolation of the other, satisfices or limits, the policy maker's success in strategy development. Ultimately, this thesis asserts that poor civil-military relations contributed to the demise of Iraq in the summer months of 2003.

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Illustrations

Introduction

The Iraqi regime…possesses and produces chemical and biological weapons. It is seeking nuclear weapons. We know the regime has produced thousands of tons of chemical agents, including mustard gas, sarin nerve gas, and VX nerve gas.
        -- President George W. Bush, October 7, 2002

My belief is that we will, in fact, be greeted as liberators…I think it will go relatively quickly…weeks rather than months.
        –-Donald Rumsfeld, May 2002

On 1 May 2003, the world watched as President George W. Bush delivered a speech aboard the USS Abraham Lincoln and in front of a giant banner displaying the words "Mission Accomplished." Beaming with confidence, President Bush declared American military triumph in Iraq and further stated, "The battle of Iraq is all but one victory in a war on terror."[1]   As we now know, this speech represented a victory lap performed too soon. The political and military situation in Iraq, and any semblance of American success, would unravel just a few months later.

There has been much controversy and debate surrounding the US-led invasion of Iraq and its aftermath; and many pundits and scholars have offered explanations for the subsequent emergence of the Iraqi insurgency, pointing to a variety of failures in both the planning and execution of US military efforts. Of course, as with any other complex problem, there is no single explanation for the path of the Iraqi conflict, or for the shortcomings of US strategy following early and rapid operational success.

While recognizing the potential for multiple interacting causes, this thesis examines the effects of US civil-military relations on the 2003 US-led Iraq invasion and its aftermath. It argues that many of the problems

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[1] Thomas E. Ricks, *Fiasco,* (New York, NY: The Penguin Press, 2006), 145.

the United States encountered after early successes in Iraq stemmed from a dysfunctional interaction between civilian and military leaders. In particular, US failures in the aftermath of the 2003 invasion were largely due to the Bush administration's inability to comprehend the value of dissenting ideas and opposing perspectives emanating from the military establishment. The overall result was less than optimal strategic decision-making and strategic planning.

By making this argument, the thesis takes a contrasting view from that offered by the widely acclaimed civil-military theorist Eliot Cohen. In his seminal book *Supreme Command*, Cohen introduces the concept of "unequal dialogue" as the benchmark of effective civil-military relations during times of war. Going even further, Cohen suggests that a political leader who exercises unequal dialogue with the armed forces is more likely to achieve military success. In 2003, while referencing the US invasion of Iraq, Cohen claims Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld properly utilized unequal dialogue and thus "won his war."[2]

In hindsight, it is clear the United States did not, in fact, win the war in 2003. The subsequent military struggles and collapse of US policy in Iraq necessarily leads one to question Cohen's claims. Either the theory of unequal dialogue is flawed or else Cohen misreads the extent to which political leadership actually employed the tenets of unequal dialogue in the lead up to the invasion and in its aftermath.

The Unequal Dialogue as a Framework for Analysis

As a model for effective civil-military relations during times of war, the unequal dialogue consists of two critical elements. The first is civilian intervention into military matters: civilian leadership should be intrusive, probing and questioning military thinking on strategy, plans, technological developments and even tactics. As Winston Churchill

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[2] Eliot A. Cohen, *Supreme Command*, (New Your, NY: Anchor Books, 2002), 259.

noted in his reflections on WWII, "the civilian must understand the stakes, and that the statesman has a right to probe."[3] While maintaining this right, however, the statesman must be careful not to micro-manage. According to Cohen, the degree of civilian intervention in military matters is matter of prudence not principle.[4] The second element of unequal dialogue is the encouragement of open debate between civilian and military leaders, and the careful weighing of dissenting views from military leaders, particularly as related to strategic-level matters. This perspective on ideal civil-military relations differs substantially from Samuel Huntington's "normal theory" of objective control that establishes a clear divide between the statesman and general, with military leadership operating with a great deal of autonomy in its sphere of expertise.[5]

Cohen points to President Abraham Lincoln (which is somewhat ironic given the setting of President Bush's speech in 2003) during the American Civil War as an example of a wartime statesman who effectively employed unequal dialogue with the military and thus achieved strategic success.[6] As Cohen highlights, Lincoln understood that in order to succeed in obtaining the desired political end state, prying and probing of the military was an essential step in the process. Further, it is commonly known that President Lincoln frequently fired generals for not meeting expectations or achieving key objectives. Lincoln's actions in this regard can be characterized under the first part of the unequal dialogue. Perhaps not as well-known is Lincoln's ability to create a climate of trust conducive to open civil-military debate and the exploration of different strategies by military leaders. Throughout the Civil War, Lincoln solicited contrarian views from military leaders for

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[3] Cohen, 12.
[4] Cohen, 12.
[5] Cohen, 12.
[6] Cohen, 112.

several reasons. For one, Lincoln wanted to remain abreast of every possible course of action that might provide strategic value. Second, Lincoln entertained opposing views as a calculated technique for maintaining rivals as engaged and constructive members of his strategic decision-making team.

Shortcomings of the Unequal Dialogue in 2003

Again, Cohen claims Secretary Rumsfeld effectively utilized the tenets of unequal dialogue and thus "won his war" in Iraq.[7] Of course Cohen made this observation early in the war and thus did not have the benefit of hindsight. But, nonetheless, Cohen was wrong in his characterization of US civil-military relations in the period leading up to and during the initial stages of the Iraq War. At least he was wrong with half of the characterization. In essence, the Bush administration only applied one of the two tenets of unequal dialogue.

Rumsfeld's intrusive approach, on the surface, closely resembled that of Eliot Cohen's ideal wartime civilian leader, the leader who is engaged with and not separated from operational military matters. Thus, Rumsfeld's policies and actions leading up to and in the early stages of the Iraq War were consistent with the first part of Cohen's theory. In this sense, Secretary Rumsfeld exhibited some similarities with President Lincoln.

But as this thesis will show, Rumsfeld, and the administration as a whole, was far less adept at encouraging and accounting for opposing views from within the military establishment. When Rumsfeld returned to Washington in 2001 as the new Secretary of Defense, he took over the office with a clear agenda of defense transformation as well as a firm commitment to run the Department of Defense his own way. As the Defense Secretary began to formulate plans for a response to the 9/11

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[7] Cohen, 259.

attacks, diversity of thought was neither encouraged nor valued. Instead, Rumsfeld assumed a more intrusive, micromanaging role; and it appeared to most that he accepted one solution—his own. The interaction between political and military leaders often looked more like an unbalanced monologue than an unequal dialogue. This shortcoming would have a profound impact on US strategic decision-making and strategic planning related to the Iraq War.

Importance of a Civil-Military Climate that Values Dissenting Views

In most cases, a personal or platform agenda is expected, even perfectly suitable, in politics. Problems arise, however, when these agendas become the sole solution to strategic problems without the consideration of other alternatives. A political climate or civil-military relationship that does not promote and value dissention hinders effective strategic decision-making.

In *The Wisdom of Crowds,* James Surowiecki speaks at length about the benefits of diversity of thought in decision-making. He argues that diversity of thought contributes to better decisions not just by adding different perspectives to the group but also by adding substantial value to possible solution sets.[8] Furthermore, Surwiecki writes,

> The fact that cognitive diversity matters does not mean that if you assemble a group of diverse but thoroughly uniformed people, their collective wisdom will be smarter than an expert's. But if you can assemble a diverse group of people who possess varying degrees of knowledge and insight, you're better off entrusting it with major decisions rather than leaving them in the hands of one or two people.[9]

This wisdom of crowds is applicable to problems that leaders and strategists must deal with when planning and executing combat operations in complex environments such as the one the United States

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[8] James Surowiecki, *The Wisdom of Crowds,* (New York, NY: Anchor Books, 2005), 39.
[9] Surowiecki, 31.

faced in Iraq. Unequal dialogue is, in effect, a means of exploiting the cognitive diversity inherent to crowd sourcing while at the same time maintaining the necessary hierarchy of civilian control. To achieve such benefits, both civilian policy makers and military officials should work to foster a relational structure that provides freedom of expression and clear pathways for diversity of thought. While this might not guarantee military victory, it will result in better military strategy.

Thesis Roadmap

Again, this thesis argues that many of the problems the United States encountered after early successes in Iraq stemmed from a dysfunctional interaction between civilian and military leaders; and more specifically, US troubles in the aftermath of the 2003 invasion were largely due to the Bush administration's failure to consider dissenting ideas from the military. More broadly, the thesis proposes the value of nurturing a civil-military climate that encourages and is accepting of opposing views.

Toward these ends, the remainder of the thesis consists of three chapters and a conclusion. As background, Chapter 1 outlines the similarities and distinctions between different civil-military relation theories and then discusses how Cohen's theory fits within this broader literature. The chapter then looks at how other civil-military theorists have addressed the Iraq War.

Chapter 2 examines the internal dynamics and political climate of the Bush administration leading up to the Iraq War. This chapter highlights Secretary Rumsfeld's tight hold on his inner circle and the National Security Council, and shows how the administration's inability or unwillingness to allow dissenting views within the strategic decision-making process provided the context for strategic failure in Iraq.

Chapter 3 assesses civil-military relations and strategic decision-making during the early stages of the Iraq War. Even though the initial

strategy may have been flawed, the US had ample opportunity to adjust course once things began to go poorly. But the administration's failure to apply both tenets of unequal dialogue effectively during the summer of 2003 prevented much needed course corrections. While this chapter characterizes the administration's probing of the military as both justified and valuable, it also highlights the negative consequences of the administration's unwillingness to encourage and incorporate diversity of strategic thought.

CHAPTER I

Civil-Military Relations and Eliot Cohen's Framework

We will maintain the trust and confidence of our
elected leaders…. civilian control of the military
remains a core principle of our Republic and we will
preserve it. We will remain an apolitical institution
and sustain this position at all costs.
                    - Chairman of Joint Chiefs of Staff, 2011 NMS

I'm neither intimidated by our military, nor am I
thinking that they're somehow trying to undermine
my role as commander in chief.
                    - President Obama, 2010

As background to the examination of US civil-military relations associated with the Iraq War, this chapter briefly outlines key concepts from the literature on civil-military relations – primarily the work of Samuel Huntington, Peter Feaver, and Risa Brooks – and then discusses how Cohen's idea of unequal dialogue fits within this broader literature. The chapter then summarizes what other civil-military scholars have to say about Iraq.

The Development of Western Civil-Military Relations Theory

The rise of modern nationalism in the late 18th and early 19th centuries forged a new way of conceptualizing the orchestration of war and altered the relationship between the soldier and the state. Carl von Clausewitz recognized that with the advent of the French Revolution, any attempt to separate the business of politicians and soldiers was a hopeless and meaningless task.[1] In the Clausewitzian view, war is not

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[1] Eliot A. Cohen, *Supreme Command*, (New Your, NY: Anchor Books, 2002), 7.

only an act of policy but also a true political instrument.[2] It is a continuation of political intercourse carried on with other means.[3]

Western, and eventually American, civil-military relations emerged from the Clausewitzian portrayal of the diplomat guiding the hand of the general:

> At the institutional level, there are two hands on the sword. The civil hand determines when to draw it from its sheath and the military hand guides it in its use. The dominant hand of policy determines the purpose for which the sword exists. The non-dominant hand of force sharpens the sword for its use and wields it into combat.[4]

Since the American Revolution, US strategic decision-making has constituted a bargain between the people, civil government, and the military establishment[5]. Bargaining for power or support has driven a gap between these actors. Because of this bargaining arrangement, problems associated with the civil-military "gap" emerge at three levels.[6]

At the level of American society, problems arise when fewer and fewer citizens have any real connection with members of the armed services or politicians. Problems also tend to arise at the level of strategy, or with the "strategy-policy nexus," where the military often dominates the decision making process.[7] At the level of policy implementation, problems may arise when too many tasks that should be handled by civilian agencies are instead turned over to the military.[8] Much of the literature dealing with the civil-military "gap" focuses on

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[2] Michael Howard and Peter Paret. *Carl von Clausewitz: On War.*Princeton, (NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984),
63.
[3] Cohen, 7.
[4] Mackubin Thomas Owens, "What Military Officers Need to know about Civil-Military Relations," Naval War College, 2012, 2.
[5] Owens, 5.
[6] Owens, 5.
[7] Owens, 23.
[8] Owens, 24.

foreign policy or strategic decision-making and emphasizes the dangers of this decision-making being overly influenced by the military or completely dominated by the politician.[9]

In addition, most of the debate over American civil-military relations since WWII has centered on concerns about civilian control of the military establishment. Questions concerning the proper role of the military in strategic-decision making often arise. Others ask whether the military should have a say in when the US should go to war and not just weigh in on how to wage war. These questions and others stem from the experiences of the Korean and Vietnam wars in which politicians often marginalized the military's perspectives in regard to key strategic issues. Such questions regarding civilian control, the proper role of the military, and the optimal relationship between the two sides have been debated for decades and remain relevant and important today. No other American civil-military theorist has influenced these debates more than Samuel Huntington.

Huntington versus the Contemporary Theorists
Samuel Huntington's Framework

Although written in 1957, Huntington's *The Soldier and the State* provides what is still the dominant theoretical paradigm in US civil-military relations.[10] According to Huntington, civilian control is achieved when the power of military groups is reduced.[11] He presents two opposing ways how military power can be minimized. Subjective control seeks to maximize civilian power and influence over the military by blurring the line between the civilian and military spheres. Objective

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9 Owens, 25.
10 Peter D. Feaver, *Armed Servants: Agency, Oversight, and Civil-Military Relations*, (Cambridge, England: Harvard University Press, 2003), 7.
11 Samuel P. Huntington, *The Soldier and The State: The Theory and Politics of Civil-Military Relations*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1957), 80.

control, conversely, maximizes military professionalism and maintains a clear divide between the civilian and military spheres. Civilians grant the armed forces a high degree of autonomy in military affairs in exchange for the armed forces remaining clear of politics. Huntington argues that objective control, with its clear civil-military divide, to be the ideal. While subjective control might lessen the political power of the military, objective control better ensures civilian control because it renders the military professional politically neutral.[12]

According to Huntington, the goal of the military is to execute its profession without flaw, remaining the sole manager of violence.[13] Objective control promotes this defining role of the general by producing the lowest level of political power within the military. While doing so, it preserves that essential element necessary for the existence of a military profession, a highly professional officer corps ready to carry out the objectives from the statesman.[14] According to Huntington, this meets the true intent of civilian control. Subjective control, on the other hand, seeks to maximize civilian control. While doing so, it effectively tames the military by civilianizing it, making it a mirror of the state and more politically aware.[15] Huntington refers those who advocate the subjective control mechanism, as "fusionists." Fusionists believe that the categories of political and military matters are difficult to distinguish.[16] Huntington however, sees no problem with the distinction of the military professional and the statesman. Objective control, in Huntington's view, offers a simple formula for the guidance of politicians and the education of officers, and it promises not only civilian control and constitutional governance but strategic success.[17]

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[12] Huntington, 84.
[13] Huntington, 85.
[14] Huntington, 84.
[15] Cohen, 243.
[16] Cohen, 243.
[17] Cohen, 245.

Peter Feaver's Framework

In *Armed Servants,* Peter Feaver speculates that Huntington's model of a clear division between the statesman and general is not as relevant given the changes seen post-Cold War. Further, Feaver maintains that Huntington's rigid institutional theory of objective control, which recognizes autonomous military professionalism, ignores the sociological influences both on political figures and military officials.[18] Ultimately, Feaver's application of Agency Theory departs from the traditional view of civil-military relations and characterizes civilian and military officials as political actors responding to various costs and benefits.[19] Contemporary conflict tends to blur the line between political and military roles and increases the need to understand the fluid and complex nature of civil-military interactions.

Feaver's theoretical approach thus turns US civil-military relations into a variable rather than a constant.[20] Patterns of civil-military relations stem from the military adjusting its behavior based on perceived incentives or punishments from political leaders. Military expectations of punishment for opposing the views of political leaders tend to stifle open dialogue.

Risa Brooks' Framework

Risa Brooks, author of *Shaping Strategy*, extends the literature on civil-military relations with her pragmatic approach to the subject. Brooks' logic reflects the United States' polarized domestic political climate in 2008. The sweeping victory by the Democrats in the US general election of 2006, resulting in Democratic Party majorities in both the House and Senate, signified growing frustration with the Bush administration.

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[18] Feaver, 9.
[19] Feaver, 14.
[20] Feaver, 285.

Democratic Party success stemmed from dissatisfaction with the administration's handling of Hurricane Katrina, the collapse of the US housing bubble, and, especially, the overall mismanagement of Iraq War.[21]

After five years of fighting, and continued rhetoric that significant change was taking place on the ground in Iraq, a national poll indicated American public opinion over the war was split. One side favored a continued presence in Iraq while the other demanded the US cut its losses and bring its troops home.

Brooks claims there are three areas where military and political preferences can diverge. First, divergence generally occurs over a state's security goals, to include how to characterize, prioritize, and identify existential threats.[22] Second, preference divergence occurs over a state's military strategy, operational plans and tactical activity. Third, preference divergence commonly relates to corporate issues over budgets and professional norms.[23] These issues not only create tension in civil-military relations, but ultimately affect strategic decision-making, or what Brooks calls the state's strategic assessment.

Eliot Cohen's Framework

Eliot Cohen bridges the gap between Huntington's rigid institutional description of civil-military relations and Peter Fever's Principle-Agent approach that emphasizes overlap, bargaining, interaction and punishment. The complexity of US civil-military relations is due in part to the changing nature of the security environment and the nation's concomitant involvement in more messy security situations. The US military has responded to these increasingly messy situations by taking

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[21] Dayne Nix, "American Civl-Military Relations," (Naval War College), 99.
[22] Risa A. Brooks, *Shaping Strategy: The Civil-Military Politics of Strategic Assessment,* (Oxford, England: Princeton University Press, 2008), 24.
[23] Brooks, 24.

on roles that were traditionally within the purview of civilian agencies.[24] Cohen argues that these situations will continue to be manageable as long as America's military leaders accept and exercise the principle of unequal dialogue.[25]   In a slight amendment to Cohen's theory, Mackubin Owens suggests there are really two "unequal dialogues" at work.[26] He claims, "On one hand, military leaders do not question the constitutional principle of civilian control over the military." On the other hand, representatives of the armed services are so much more influential than their civilian counterparts in the day-to-day formulation of U.S. foreign policy that it is almost impossible for Washington to interpret or respond to events in ways that are not militarized.[27] Overall, unequal dialogue theory highlights the need to reexamine the mutual relationships between the two parties. The military must claim a role in the making of strategy, while politicians must develop a political climate that allows the military to express its views freely.[28] At the same time, military officials must understand that civilians have the final say, not only concerning the goals of the war but also how the war is conducted.[29]

Cohen's work encapsulates a number of other contemporary theories. His theory displays shades of the cost-benefit calculus presented in Feaver's arguments. It also speaks to Brooks' strategic assessment in that in order to foster strategic coordination between policy makers and military officers, there must be a political climate that allows for the possibility of dissenting views and ideas. Thus, in a climate where political

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[24] Owens, 19.
[25] Cohen, 3.
[26] Owens, 35.
[27] Owens, 33.
[28] Owens, 80.
[29] Owens, 80.

leaders dominate and preference divergence is low, the dialogue between civilians and military generally are not restrained.[30]

Therefore, in relation to Cohen's two-part theory, the first part, that of the probing statesman, is synonymous with Feaver's principle agent framework, which illustrates the need for civilians to assure themselves through constant monitoring that the military will behave as intended.[31] Part two of Cohen's theory, which characterizes the open flow of communication between the statesman and the general, is analogous to Brooks' claims of strategic coordination, the process through which alternative military strategies are discussed and analyzed.

A look at the 2003 Iraq invasion

Civil-Military relations have a deep effect on strategic-level decision-making. Clausewitz and Huntington provide the US's foundational basis for civil-military relations and Peter Feaver, Risa Brooks, and Eliot Cohen all extend Clausewitz's original claim that war is an extension of policy. Before moving on to look more closely at the case of the Iraq war through the lens of Cohen's notion of unequal dialogue, the remainder of this chapter offers some brief thoughts on what the other contemporary theorists (Feaver and Brooks) have to say about Iraq. These perspectives reinforce two essential points that support the main argument of this thesis. Both tenets of Cohen's theory must be followed for effective civil-military relations during times of war.

Feaver's Perspective on Iraq (Part One of Cohen's Theory)

In *Armed Servants,* Peter Feaver claims that elected civilians have the right to be wrong. In a democracy, civilian political leaders have the right to ask for things in a national security realm that are ultimately not

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[30] Brooks, 5.
[31] Feaver, 54.

conducive to good national security.[32] The military should advise against such policies, but the military should not prevent those policies from being implemented. Any steps by the military to block civilian leadership's preferred policies fall under what Feaver terms as shirking. [33]

During the planning stages of Operation Desert Storm, the civilian administration felt military resistance against political demands. Secretary of Defense Richard Cheney believed that General Colin Powell's (at the time the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff) hesitance in making the liberation of Kuwait a mission goal was tainted by political judgments. Specifically, Cheney perceived military leadership as purposely dragging its heels in preparing viable military options in the immediate aftermath of Iraq's invasion of Kuwait.[34] General Powell, on the other hand, viewed his own actions as justified and as part of his duty as the principal military advisor to the President. Viewed through the lens of Feaver's framework, General Powell's actions in 1991 constitute military shirking. In 2003, however, Feaver characterized Colin Powell's actions as a result of the sociological implications of civil-military relations. Following 9/11, then Secretary of State Powell and several senior military officials warned the President and Secretary Rumsfeld that Iraq should not be the central focus for retaliation. As operational planning for Iraq commenced, Defense Secretary Rumsfeld began closing the NSC to dissenting views. For Powell, the cost of remaining outside the decision-making authority of the Security Council outweighed continued resistance; thus, the DOS acquiesced. Powell later explained, "To try and effect change outside the inner circle would have been a road too difficult to travel."[35] Although Powell understood the value of diversity

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[32] Feaver, 65.
[33] Feaver, 135.
[34] Feaver, 237.
[35] Colin Powell, *It Worked For Me: In Life and Leadership*, (New York, NY: Harper Collins Publishers, 2010), 145.

of thought within the administration, continuing to present opposing views would have resulted in marginalization of the DOS senior staff. Powell and others, facing punishment in the form of marginalization, thus made a cost-benefit analysis and, no longer presenting divergent strategic views, acquiesced to the administration's policy preferences.

Brooks' Perspective on Iraq (Part Two of Cohen's Theory)

Writing at the height of the US war in Iraq, Risa Brooks calls into question the political climate of the Bush administration. Brooks observes that the administration's high preference divergence between the civilians and the military over what should be the proper military force structure created tension and therefore strained the free flow of communication. Because of the constrained dialogue between Rumsfeld and the military, Brooks suggests that weaknesses in strategic coordination affected the strategic decision-making within the administration.

Strategic coordination ultimately affects how well alternative courses of action are probed and analyzed. [36] Furthermore, poor strategic coordination can lead to shortsightedness in considering the political implications of military activity. [37] Brooks suggests the lack of strategic coordination before the 2003 invasion and during subsequent operations ultimately affected the Bush administration's strategic assessment and disintegrated the political-military activity.[38] Brooks' framework is thus consistent with the second part of Cohen's unequal dialogue theory.

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[36] Brooks, 36.
[37] Brooks, 222.
[38] Brooks, 222.

The Way Forward

The next two chapters examine the case of Operation Iraqi Freedom, from the run up through the year 2004, through the lens of Cohen's unequal dialogue theory. In particular, these chapters focus on the second tenet of Cohen's theory. The analysis suggests a dysfunctional civil-military relationship stemming from the administration's unwillingness or inability to consider dissenting perspectives from within the military establishment. This failure, in turn, was the product of leadership style, personal idiosyncrasies, and overall poor political climate.

As the basis for this analysis, I examine the routines, norms, and established forums of interaction between military chiefs and political leaders of the state. Norms and patterns of conversation are critical. When strategic coordination is working, the unequal dialogue across the political and military divide may seem conflictual at times. However, what remains critical is that one viewpoint does not hijack the conversation or shut down the dialogue itself.[39] The airing of competing views within public congressional discussions and the free-flow of ideas in private settings between the president and the National Security Council, followed by military leadership fully supporting and implementing the policies selected by civilian leaders, are the hallmarks of effective unequal dialogue at work. Unfortunately, the historical record associated with the Iraq War is replete with indicators that effective unequal dialogue was lacking.

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Chapter II

"The Run Up"

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> *One of the lessons of Vietnam, which we failed to heed in the Iraq war and the Afghanistan surge, is that before you commit U.S. military forces to aid or assist, it is essential to know what you want them to achieve.*

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[39] Brooks, 38.

- Former Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Public Affairs, Kathleen Troria McFarland

      Offering explanation for US difficulties in Iraq, some analysts point to a failure to understand the implications of urban warfare. Others highlight a more basic inability to comprehend what the war was about. Absent from much of the discussion is consideration of how the administration's civil-military climate affected strategic decision-making. Patterns of civil-military relations established during the months leading up to the war laid the conditions for a lack of unequal dialogue. Again, according to the theory of unequal dialogue, the statesman should do two things. First, the statesman should probe, question and investigate military thinking from the strategic all the way down to the tactical level if necessary. Second, the statesman must allow dissenting views into strategic level decisions. This chapter shows that by employing the former and failing to do the latter, the Bush administration put the US at a strategic disadvantage even prior to the 2003 Iraq invasion.

Pre-Election

      America's wars of the 1990's caused frustrations among senior-ranking military officials. The US armed forces emerged from Operation Desert Storm with the reputation as the preeminent, dominating military force that could stabilize any situation in the world.[1] According to former Assistant Secretary of Defense Richard Armitage, however, US involvement in the Balkan campaigns following Desert Storm called US military preeminence into question. In Armitage's view, not only did the Clinton administration have short-sighted foreign and defense policies, but the administration failed to develop adequate exit strategies for getting out of Bosnia and Kosovo.[2] After George W. Bush was elected

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[1] Bob Woodward, *State of Denial,* (New York, NY: Simon and Schuster, 2006), 7.
[2] Woodward, 7.

president in 2000, the Republicans had a chance to reshape American foreign policy.[3]

Figure 1: George W. Bush administration 2003
http://media.vanityfair.com/photos/54cbf5931ca1cf0a23ac5b53/master/w_954/image.jpg

George Bush and Dick Cheney determined America needed a new stance on foreign policy and decided how best to employ the armed forces. Shifting from the emphasis on military nation-building, Bush's election campaign advocated military restraint. Believing that the Clinton administration used the military too much in foreign policy, Bush argued against employing the military in noncombat missions or using troops as nation-builders.[4] During the first presidential debate in October 2000, Bush indicated that the "role of the military is to fight and win wars, and therefore prevent wars from happening in the first place."[5] In addition, during his speech accepting the vice presidential

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[3] Woodward, 8.

[4] Thomas E. Ricks, *Fiasco,* (New York, NY: The Penguin Press, 2006), 24.

[5] Ricks, 24.

nomination, Cheney stated,

> For eight years, President Clinton and Vice President Gore have extended our military commitments while depleting our military power. Rarely has so much been demanded of our armed forces and so little given to them in return. George W. Bush and I are going to change that. I can promise them now, help is on the way. Soon, our men and women in uniform will once again have a commander in chief they can respect, a commander in chief who understands their mission and restores their morale.[6]

These views not only resonated well with the American public. Senior military officials like General Powell welcomed the idea of restrained use of the military.

For General Powell, the wars following Operation Desert Storm elicited memories of Vietnam. The notion that a limited use of force could produce favorable results was in stark opposition to the lessons learned three decades earlier. Senior military officials felt the Bosnian and Kosovo wars undermined the Weinberger-Powell doctrine established in the early 1980's. This doctrine stressed the importance of committing all forces and resources necessary to win the war, and only when vital interests were at stake.[7] Thus, senior military officers embraced the new administration's stance on restraint in US foreign policy and commitment to intervene with US forces only as a last result.

Initially, American foreign policy toward Iraq emphasized containment. According to Thomas Ricks, "There really wasn't a 'war party' inside the Bush administration before the 9/11 attacks."[8]

Although questions of whether Saddam destroyed his own weapons programs still linger, the fact remains that by the late 1990s, containment was working. Gen Zinni commented in 1999 that although "it was messy, and could have been done better, Saddam was contained,

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[6] Ricks, 45.

[7] Dag Henriksen, *NATO'S Gamble: Combining Diplomacy and Airpower in the Kosovo Crisis 1998-1999*, (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2007), 68.

[8] Ricks, 27.

and he was not a threat to the region."[9] Thus, in the defining moments
of the election campaign, the soon-to-be administration made clear that
Iraq was not a primary issue, nor was Iraqi regime change. Bush did not
see a need to change policy, but only to "breathe new life into an Iraqi
containment policy by imposing smarter sanctions."[10] There were some
within the new administration, however, with different ideas. Paul
Wolfowitz, for one, wanted significant change to the outgoing
administration's Iraq policy, preferring more aggressive actions.[11] And
Wolfowitz did not seem concerned with the military's fear that the US
might find itself embroiled in a conflict with no way out.

  The push for increased military restraint was not the only goal of
the administration. Bush also indicated that there needed to be
significant changes within the structure of the nation's defense.
Specifically, Bush wanted to transform the military into a more mobile
and modern fighting force.[12] During a public speech on the campus of
The Citadel in September 1999, Bush spoke at length about creating the
military of the next century. "Homeland defense," Bush claimed, "has
become an urgent duty...America needs a military capable of defending
its people against new and emerging threats."[13] Donald Rumsfeld,
Bush's newly selected Defense Secretary, would enact this
transformation at any cost.

  In his first Pentagon tour back in the 1970s, Rumsfeld acquired a
disdain for the US military complex, a system which he thought was
completely unmanageable.[14] While serving as the Defense Secretary
under the Ford administration, Rumsfeld laid the foundations for his
defense transformation immediately following the Vietnam War. This

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[9] Ricks 22.
[10] Ricks, 28.
[11] Ricks, 6.
[12] Woodward, 8.
[13] Woodward, 15.
[14] Woodward, 17.

reform did not completely come to fruition; and during his initial interview for Defense Secretary in 1999, Rumsfeld told Bush and Cheney, "I think I've got some things I'd like to finish."[15] In Rumsfeld's view, the military services were narrow-minded.[16] He wanted to change the entire US military, transforming it into a leaner, more efficient, agile, lethal fighting machine.[17] Not only was this important to the military, but also to the credibility of the United States.

Post-Election

After the first one hundred days of the new administration, senior military officials believed that Rumsfeld was waging a hostile takeover of the entire Department of Defense.[18] A month prior to 9/11, President Bush, Vice President Cheney, and Defense Secretary Rumsfeld interviewed several candidates for the next Chairman of the Joint Chiefs. Gen Hugh Shelton, the Chairman at the time, feared that the next Chairman would be marginalized. Rumsfeld made it known that he was unconvinced of the value of the Chairman serving as the principal military advisor to the National Security Council and to the president.[19] Rumsfeld did not like that a member of the council could possess an opinion that might run contrary to his own.[20] Rumsfeld felt the line of command authority, which ran from the President through the Defense Secretary to the Combatant Commanders was clear, and should not be complicated with opposing views. Anyone infringing on this line of communication, to include even the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, was in violation of the established command authority.

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[15] Woodward, 17.
[16] Woodwar, 17.
[17] Woodward, 17.
[18] Woodward, 39.
[19] Woodward, 46.
[20] Woodward, 47.

Figure 2: Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld 2003
http://burka.blogspot.com/RumsfeldAngry.jpg

Admiral Vernon Clark, the Naval CNO at the time, was a front-runner for the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs position along with General Richard Myers, the sitting Vice Chairman. Although both candidates would bring unique qualities to the position, General Shelton suggested Rumsfeld choose Admiral Clark. According to Shelton, Clark would stand his ground in discussions on American foreign policy and military reform, and also offer dissenting views if necessary for the benefit of the nation.

General Shelton believed the new administration was focused too heavily on developing new military hardware and on reorganizing and modernizing the force.[21] In this sense, General Shelton felt the administration had misinterpreted the lessons from Vietnam. The focus should not be on obtaining new types of weaponry, but instead on how and when the US should employ military force. General Shelton

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[21] Woodward, 70.

perceived that Admiral Clark could challenge strong politicians on these issues and offer sound, un-biased military opinion to the council. With General Myers as Chief, General Shelton worried the military voice would be muted.[22]

As noted above, Rumsfeld sought to minimize the influence of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs within the strategic decision-making process. More broadly, he viewed the Chairman and the entire Joint Staff as an opponent rather than as a needed voice offering different perspectives in strategic decision-making. In Rumsfeld's view, military leaders like General Powell turned the Chairman's position into a politicized powerhouse and this represented a problem to be fixed.[23] Not surprisingly, Rumsfeld selected General Myers as the new CJCS.

9/11

The events of 9/11 stunned and outraged the general American public. Although a great tragedy, the terrorist attacks presented a political opportunity for those arguing for changes in the United States' stance on Iraq. From the outset of debates on Iraq, tension existed between the uniformed military and the Office of the Secretary Defense (OSD) over two related issues: whether the US should attack Iraq, and if so, how large of a force was needed.[24] Gen Jack Keane, the Army's number-two officer in Iraq, thought the US should put aside the Iraq question and keep its eye on the ball in Afghanistan.[25] He recommended keeping two Army divisions on the Afghan-Pakistani border until the capture of Osama bin Laden and the destruction of bin Laden's organization. In addition, should the US choose to invade Iraq, most senior military officers agreed with Gen Zinni's post-Desert Fox study,

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[22] Woodward, 70.
[23] Woodward, 78.
[24] Ricks, 33.
[25] Ricks, 34.

which envisioned three heavy armored divisions for the combat operations as well as post-combat stability operations.[26] These perspectives, however, did not match the dominant school of thought within OSD.

Rumsfeld would only consider smaller and faster military force options than either employed in the 1991 invasion or recommended as part of General Zinni's Desert Crossing package. In an interview in late 2002, General Zinni commented, "Rumsfeld simply vetoed my COA [Course of Action]. When the military guys, the Joint Staff, brought it up, the civilian leadership simply said no. We will not entertain assumptions that are too pessimistic."

Not only did Rumsfeld hold the civilian inner circle of the NSC captive to his belief in how the US should proceed, but the US Central Command Commander, General Tommy Franks, also seemed disinclined to contrary views. General Franks, General Zinni's successor, along with Gen Myers, the new CJCS, felt that new advances in technology had altered the need for large conventional armies. Both men believed the development of precision weapons, satellite support, and unmanned aerial vehicles had curtailed the requirements for large troop formations. As the Assistant Division Commander (Maneuver) of 1st Cavalry Division in Operation Desert Storm, Gen Franks saw first-hand the impact of advanced technology on the field of battle. However, Gen Franks did not participate in the Balkan Wars where many other senior military officers had learned the dangers of overreliance on technology.

In just 14 months, from the new administration's inauguration in January 2001 to the immediate aftermath of the 9/11 attacks, Secretary Rumsfeld had deliberately molded the President's inner circle to his liking. The Chairman of the Joint Chiefs was hand-picked based on a perceived willingness to support Rumsfeld's views, and the

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[26] Ricks, 34.

commander of Central Command increasingly sided with Rumsfeld with the passage of time.[27] For any administration, having a principal advisor to the president and a combatant commander whose opinions run parallel to those of the defense secretary is not necessarily a bad combination. The problem, however, occurs if the inner circle rejects and does not entertain alternative views, which was the case with US strategic planning in 2002.

Iraq War Planning

From the summer of 2002 to the spring of 2003, the lack of open debate and the marginalization of opposing views resulted in a series of interrelated flaws in the strategic planning process associated with the pending war in Iraq.[28] The outcome was undeveloped plans and insufficient forces for post-combat stability operations.

The Bush administration had a particular conception of how the war would unfold.[29] After the combat phase, and after Saddam Hussein was removed from power, the US could replace the heads of Iraq's ministries; and the state would continue to function.[30] According to Rumsfeld, American forces would be greeted as liberators, and the Iraqi people would rally to the cause of the newly-configured Iraqi state.[31] These views permeated the administration.

Although Secretary of State Colin Powell agreed with the need for preemption based on a flawed perception of Iraq's WMD capability, he was significantly concerned about postwar security in Iraq. The state department pressed Rumsfeld on the possibility of a breakdown in

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[27] Ricks, 33.
[28] Risa A. Brooks, *Shaping Strategy: The Civil-Military Politics of Strategic Assessment*, (Oxford, England: Princeton University Press, 2008), 240.
[29] Brooks, 229.
[30] Brooks, 230.
[31] Ricks, 49.

postwar security, but Rumsfeld failed to listen.[32] In particular, the state department funded an extensive initiative called the 'Future of Iraq Project', which included regional experts' opinions on postwar issues; and Rumsfeld failed to consider its value.[33]

Although General Franks and General Myers aligned with Rumsfeld's views on Iraq, the Joint Staff and senior military leaders at the theater level expressed growing concerns over US strategy and the lack of effective planning. While serving as the Joint Staff J-3, Lt Gen Gregory Newbold remained outspoken during the months leading up to the invasion. During an informal meeting with Gen Myers, Lieutenant General Newbold asked, "Why Iraq, why now?...If it is understood that the fight is against terrorists, why are we diverting assets and attention from the objective which may harm and undercut the counteroffensive against al Qaeda?"[34] In addition, there was a major discrepancy with how the intelligence section of the war plan assessed weapons of mass destruction. Much of the text of the plan was replete with inconsistencies and uncertainties about confirmed weapons caches.[35] Yet, the associated target list included confirmed weapons of mass destruction sites, something that proved inaccurate in a post-Iraq War study.[36]

Similarly, Brigadier General Mark Hertling, the Joint Staff J-7 of future plans and concepts, and General Gregory Hooker, Central Command's lead intelligence analyst for Iraq, both worried about the administration's faulty assumptions going into Iraq. Specifically, both generals felt the administration underestimated the threat to American troops and the difficulties of occupying the country.[37] Rumsfeld's office

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[32] Brooks, 230.
[33] Brooks, 230.
[34] Ricks, 40.
[35] Ricks, 41.
[36] Ricks, 41.
[37] Ricks, 42.

repeatedly ignored such concerns. Instead of examining and reconciling contrarian views, Secretary Rumsfeld and Gen Franks pushed aside alternative perspectives regarding the need to invade Iraq and the size of the invasion force.[38] In a postwar analysis, Gen Hooker stated that there was an absence of an authoritative, systematic review, or consolidation of viewpoints between the military and senior policymakers.[39] Rather than trying to determine which points of view were correct, policymakers simply pressed forward with their pre-existing strategic vision.[40]

Overall, the military's concerns agitated below the surface but never rose to the level of confrontation on a public stage. In late summer of 2002, a group of Army commanders met at the Army War College in Carlisle, Pennsylvania, to discuss Central Command's failed performance in Afghanistan. The group concluded that major errors committed during the offensive led to broader strategic effects and a failure to achieve the desired political end state.[41] The Afghan campaign had emphasized short-term, tactical objectives that did not align well with long-term goals. Believing the US was on the verge of making similar mistakes in Iraq, meeting attendees presented their findings to Secretary Rumsfeld, Gen Franks, and Gen Myers in a summarized report in early fall 2002. The report was effectively ignored.

The Army Staff at the Pentagon submitted its own report in early December 2002 noting the administration's failure to consider properly the strategic risks associated with invading and occupying Iraq. The Army Staff's main concern was the administration's fixation on winning the war with no concept of how to secure the peace.[42] The report specifically advised against two major actions that Ambassador Paul

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[38] Ricks, 43.
[39] Ricks, 43.
[40] Ricks, 43.
[41] Ricks, 70.
[42] Ricks, 72.

Bremer II would later take in 2003. Specifically, the report advised against dismantling the Iraqi army given that that the army could serve as a unifying force:

> In a highly diverse and fragmented society like Iraq, the military is one of the few national institutions that stresses national unity as an important principle. To tear apart the army in the war's aftermath could lead to the destruction of one of the only forces of unity within the society.[43]

In addition, the report warned against the top-down "de-Baathification" that Bremer later mandated. The report concluded by recommending that the US model the policies of post WWII. In the aftermath of WWII, US authorities employed a bottom-up approach by having anti-Nazi Germans in every town review detailed questionnaires filled out by every German and then determine who would have their political and economic activities curtailed.[44] Like the group of Army commanders who had met at the War College, the Army Staff got little response from civilian leadership.[45]

By limiting his inner circle and surrounding himself with those who shared his preferences, Rumsfeld could evade the bureaucratic inertia of the services, which he felt had their own parochial ideas about how to fight the war.[46] The administration's insistence on restricting the dissenting views of individuals with experience, specifically within the Joint Chiefs and the army, negatively impacted the United States' strategy in Iraq. In particular, Secretary Rumsfeld's unwillingness to analyze or solicit outside recommendations contrary to his own significantly hampered the administration's comprehension of the

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[43] Ricks, 73.
[44] Ricks, 73.
[45] Ricks, 73.
[46] Brooks, 241.

possible strategic implications.[47] On the eve of the United States'
invasion of Iraq, the existing civil-military climate was not very conducive
to effective unequal dialogue. Thus, the United States entered the
conflict ill-prepared to respond to the demands of the strategic
environment it would soon face.

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[47] Brooks, 241.

Chapter III
The Fighting Begins

*When you decide to get involved in a military
operation in a place like Syria, you've got to be
prepared, as we learned from Iraq and Afghanistan,
to become the government, and I'm not sure of any
country, either the United States or I don't hear of
anyone else, who's willing to take on that
responsibility.*

- General Colin Powell

On 17 March 2003, President George W. Bush issued a warning to Saddam Hussein and his two sons to surrender and leave Iraq within 48 hours. US bombing commenced the following day, even before the deadline expired, against an industrial complex in southeast Baghdad that was incorrectly assessed to be Saddam's location. On 19 March 2003, President Bush announced the beginning of Operation Iraqi Freedom, stating, "The people of the United States and our friends and allies will not live at the mercy of an outlaw regime that threatens the peace with weapons of mass murder."[1]

As a purely military operation, the invasion met Secretary Rumsfeld's expectations. By day three of the attack, elements of the US 3rd Infantry Division were over one hundred miles into Iraq, with Saddam's army on the cusp of being completely defeated.[2] During an NSC meeting five days into the operation, President Bush expressed confidence in US battlefield tactics and commented that "only one thing matters, and that is winning."[3] Footage of US Marines assisting Iraqi citizens in toppling a twenty-foot statue of Hussein reinforced a sense of successful completion.

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[1] Thomas E. Ricks, *Fiasco,* (New York, NY: The Penguin Press, 2006), 145.
[2] Ricks, 152.
[3] Ricks, 155.

Nonetheless, fighting continued, and the streets of downtown Baghdad were transformed into a war zone. Within weeks of the President's premature 'mission accomplished' speech, US troops began experiencing unconventional attacks from the Iraqis. Several field commanders noted, "Instead of the populace waving back, many Iraqis began attacking with AK-47 riffles, rocket-propelled grenades, and mortars, while riding in the back of pickup trucks." USCENTCOM was inundated with numerous first-hand accounts of these attacks, yet the NSC remained wedded to the narrative of victory. By refusing to acknowledge the realities of Iraq, US policymakers ceded the initiative to the adversary.[4] During an interview following his retirement, General Zinni observed, "When the statue came down, at that moment, we could have done some great things; however, we had insufficient forces to secure and freeze the situation and capitalize on that moment."[5]

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[4] Ricks, 146.
[5] Ricks, 146.

Figure 3: Fall of Saddam statue

Despite constant questioning from the Joint Staff and subordinate officers from USCENTCOM, Secretary Rumsfeld and General Franks remained adamant in their views on the necessary size of the force. Rumsfeld, guided by his own beliefs about defense transformation, came out of the Afghan war convinced that speed could substitute for mass in military operations.[6] Advocating a particular line of thought is not the problem. The problem arises when this particular viewpoint becomes law and the subject itself is removed from strategic debate. Up to this point, strategic coordination seemed broken. Alternative ideas of force size and force composition remained sidelined and were not entertained. The administration's inability to consider opposing views deeply affected the United States' strategic assessment.

Just as Secretary Rumsfeld disregarded opposing opinions on the

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[6] Ricks, 75.

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size of force, General Franks closed the doors on dissenting views from his subordinates within the military chain of command. Senior military officers at USCENTCOM repeatedly questioned General Franks' approach to the Iraq invasion centered on US technological and mechanical advantages.[7] The Combined Forces Land Component Commander (CFLCC), Lt Gen David McKiernan, and the CFLCC's director of operations, Maj Gen James Thurman, first voiced their concerns during the planning process in 2002. Secretary Rumsfeld and General Franks managed to sideline these concerns. By April 2003, concerns turned to frustrations and anger as the US continued to cede ground to the growing insurgency.

Secretary Rumsfeld's ability to control the flow of alternative views allowed civilian policy makers and top military officials to remain oblivious to nonconforming chatter outside the inner circle. Ultimately, concerns related to force strength and the possible collapse of security following the invasion fell on deaf ears in the policy arena and within the top echelons of USCENTCOM.

As mentioned in the introduction, James Surowiecki warns of the dangers of uniformity in strategic decision-making. In his book, *The Wisdom of Crowds*, Surowiecki claims that diversity of thought and independent thinking are most important factors in strategic decision-making.[8] Surowiecki specifically states that the best collective decisions are the product of disagreement and contest, not consensus or compromise.[9] Diversity of thought, however, appeared to be lacking with Rumsfeld's inner circle. The pre-war planning process exhibited biased thinking, and once the fighting began in spring of 2003 and then later as

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[7] Ricks, 127.
[8] James Surowiecki, *The Wisdom of Crowds,* (New York, NY: Anchor Books, 2005), 3.
[9] Surowiecki, 3.

the situation deteriorated that summer, there was little effort to examine the underlying assumptions.[10]

Summer Action

The effects of inadequate troop levels became increasingly evident from late spring to early summer 2003. The result of too few troops on the ground was an inability to prevent widespread looting and rampant detonations of IEDs, and, perhaps more damaging, a failure to manage detainees and secure Iraq's western border, where jihadists moved freely across from Syria.[11] Top military commanders would not recognize the full impact of this cross-border movement until mid-2004, after the insurgency had grown and deepened its roots in Iraq. But by the summer of 2003, Baghdad was falling apart in front of the eyes of the US military.[12]   US soldiers arriving in Baghdad received little guidance from above as to how order was to be restored. US soldiers were in some respect paralyzed by political thinking that expected American forces to be declared liberators rather than occupiers.[13]. Such a perspective encouraged military commanders to operate in a hands-off way that allowed chaos to increase in Baghdad.[14] The regime had fallen, so now what?

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[10] Risa A. Brooks, *Shaping Strategy: The Civil-Military Politics of Strategic Assessment*, (Oxford, England: Princeton University Press, 2008), 250.
[11] Ricks, 147.
[12] Ricks, 151.
[13] Ricks, 151.
[14] Ricks, 151.

Illustration 4: Insurgency erupts summer of 2003
http://cdn.theatlantic.com/assets/media/img/photo/2013/03/iraq-wars-10th-anniversary-occupation-and-insurgen/i05_0RTRO9C8/main_600.jpg?1420510470

In his book *It Worked For Me,* General Powell recounts the strategic missteps of the Bush administration's leadership during OIF. Concerned with the unpredictable consequences of the Iraq war plan, a plan that assumed victory would come with the capture of the enemy's capital, Powell applied the expression, "if you break it, you own it."[15] He explains,

> It [the expression] was a shorthand profound reality that if we take out a country's government by force, we instantly become the new government, responsible for governing the country and for the security of its people until we can turn all that over to a new, stable, and functioning government.[16]

Powell's comments were deeply rooted in his own experiences from Vietnam, experiences from which he learned first-hand the importance of securing the peace after the fighting ends.

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[15] Colin Powell, *It Worked For Me: In Life and Leadership,* (New York, NY: Harper Collins Publishers, 2010), 45.
[16] Powell, 60.

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Reflecting on the days, weeks, and months following the fall of Baghdad, Powell recalls, "We refused to react to what was happening before our eyes...

> We focused on oil production, increasing electricity output, setting up a stock market, and forming a new Iraqi government. These were all necessary, but they had little meaning and were not achievable until we and the Iraqis took charge in enforcing security to prevent the destruction of ministries, museums, infrastructure, crime from exploding, and well-known sectarian differences from turning violent.[17]

Part of the reason for the administration's misguided focus and inability to shift this focus rapidly was the failure to consider and prepare for other than expected outcomes. According to Ricks, "US forces' occupational paralysis may have been due to the cloud of cognitive dissonance that fogged the perceptions of Secretary Rumsfeld and other senior Pentagon officials at the time."[18] The administration was not finding what they had expected; namely, strong evidence of intensive efforts to develop and stockpile chemical and biological weapons, or any development of nuclear bombs. Meanwhile, they *were* finding what they had *not* expected; violent and widespread opposition to the US military presence.[19] Despite not finding what was expected, "US officials continued to speak about Iraq with unwarranted certainty, both in terms of WMD and the situation on the ground."[20]

A Call for Security

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[17] Powell, 88.
[18] Ricks, 132.
[19] Ricks, 168.
[20] Ricks, 168.

The postwar security plan President Bush approved was not implemented. Eight weeks before the invasion, Defense Secretary Rumsfeld removed Central Command as the lead planning entity and placed the Pentagon in the front seat while assigning retired Army Lieutenant General Jay Garner to head post-conflict stability operations. General Garner's primary mission was humanitarian in nature with a focus on aiding refugees and perhaps the civilian victims of Iraqi chemical or biological weapons."[21] Initially, he refused the assignment for two reasons. General Garner was put off by Rumsfeld's overbearing personality and micro-management. Second, General Garner felt the administration's inability to understand fully the amount of responsibility the United States was assuming in Iraq.[22] General Garner eventually accepted on the promise that he would have full discretion to run the operation with full autonomy. However, within six months of arriving in theater, General Garner's initial apprehensions became a reality.

Almost from day one, Rumsfeld impinged upon General Garner's authority in Iraq and controlled his efforts to staff the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA). General Garner tried to appoint retired General Zinni, but Rumsfeld blocked the appointment because of General Zinni's outspoken opposition to Rumsfeld's initial force package.[23] In addition, General Garner asked for authority over all of the reconstruction and civil administration in Iraq, a realignment he believed would strengthen the unity of effort towards stabilization.[24] Rumsfeld would have nothing of the sort. During a visit to Iraq to thank US soldiers personally for their persistence in the fight, General Myers met

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[21] Ricks, 80.
[22] Ricks, 81.
[23] Ricks, 80.
[24] Bob Woodward, *State of Denial*, (New York, NY: Simon and Schuster, 2006), 158.

with General Garner and expressed his endorsement of the realignment plan. "I agree with you," General Myers stated to General Garner, "but I can't get any headway on that...Rumsfeld just won't listen."[25]

Furthermore, the OSD largely hijacked General Garner's attempt to establish new Iraqi ministries.. Hearing news of General Garner's list of Iraqi candidates for ministry heads, the OSD expressed discontent and questioned the rationale of General Garner's team appointing future ministry members instead of the list coming from Washington.[26] Frustrated, General Garner had had enough. After this latest bout of micro-management, General Garner conveyed his frustrations with the Defense Secretary during a phone conversation: "Whenever you get the list formalized from your end, please ensure the individuals are trained and ship them over here; we'll be sure to welcome them with open arms."[27] Within less than a week of this conversation, Jerry Bremer replaced Jay Garner as the lead CPA.

Out with the Old In with the New

When Rumsfeld picked Jay Bremer to head the CPA, he directed Bremer to speed up the reconstruction of Iraq. Upon taking over in mid-May 2003, Bremer quickly made a number of moves that radically altered the American approach to Iraq and went a long way toward enflaming an anti-American insurgency.[28] First, Bremer chose to rid Iraq of its Baathist leadership by removing senior party members from their positions and banning them from future employment in the public sector.[29] In addition, as Ricks explains, "Anyone holding a position in the top three management layers of any ministry, government-run

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[25] Woodward, 160.
[26] Woodward, 162.
[27] Woodward, 163.
[28] Ricks, 155.
[29] Ricks, 159.

corporation, university, or hospital and who was a party member-even of a junior rank-would be deemed to be a senior Baathist and so be fired."[30]

Bremer's actions departed significantly from General Garner's original plan that emphasized maintaining and working within existing institutional structures.[31] Bremer's plan ultimately drove 30,000 to 50,000 Baathists underground and created an anti-American insurgency.[32] His rationale for the Baathist purge was to make a clear statement to the regime:

> I did that because it was absolutely essential to make it clear that the Baathist ideology, which had been responsible for so many human-rights abuses and mistreatment of the people in the country over the last forty years, had to be extirpated completely from society, much as the American government extirpating Nazism from Germany after WWII.[33]

Not surprisingly, for many Iraqis, Bremer's approach had a punitive feel. Fred Iklé later commented, "This was a key misstep for US foreign policy...Democracies that achieve a military victory ought to refrain from seeking revenge. Taking revenge is a Neanderthal strategy. Instead of giving priority to policy that can transform the defeated enemy into an ally, the revenger helps the hawks on the enemy's side to recruit angry fighters who will undermine the peace settlement."[34] During the weeks following the collapse of Hussein's rule in Baghdad, the emphasis on punishment and revenge clearly harmed the US's long-term objectives.[35] The obsession to punish eventually led to an insurgency that continues to plague American efforts in the region.

Within a few weeks of Bremer's dissolution of the Baathist party, the growing insurgency began gaining more international press coverage,

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[30] Ricks, 163.
[31] Ricks, 161.
[32] Ricks, 160.
[33] Ricks, 161.
[34] Ricks, 166.
[35] Ricks, 166.

yet US policy makers refused to accept reality. When General Garner arrived back in Washington, he wanted to confront the man who hired and fired him. In a private meeting with Secretary Rumsfeld, General Garner began by quoting the ancient Chinese general and military strategic thinker, Sun Tzu. "Mr. Secretary," General Garner stated, "it's rarely ever a good idea to go to bed at night with more enemies than you started out with in the morning."[36] General Garner went on to outline three tragic decisions. He cited the extent of the de-Baathification, disbanding the army, and rejecting the Iraqi council that General Garner had constructed with great care.[37] In typical Rumsfeld fashion, the Defense Secretary brushed General Garner's comments off almost without acknowledging his presence much less recognizing the ramifications of Bremer's actions.[38] Rumsfeld was not interested in Garner's critique and simply replied, "Well, we are where we are, there's no need to discuss it."[39]

In a private interview with Garner in 2006, Bob Woodward asked why he did not elevate his frustrations with Secretary Rumsfeld to the President.[40] General Garner responded,

> I'm a military guy. My job is to report directly to my boss and ensure he knows the truth of what's happening downstream of his decisions. It is his (Rumsfeld's) job to determine the best course of action after that. Besides, if I had said it to the President in front of Cheney, Rice, and Rumsfeld, the president would have looked at them and they would have rolled their eyes signifying to the president that this is not what we should entertain right now. No one could have persuaded them I don't think. They just didn't see it coming. As the troop commanders stated, they drank Rumsfeld's Kool-Aid.[41]

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[36] Woodward, 200.
[37] Woodward, 207.
[38] Woodward, 207.
[39] Woodward, 207.
[40] Woodward, 225.
[41] Woodward, 226.

Recap

In the spring of 2003, the US military's civilian leadership wanted it to fight. However, civilian leadership failed to consider or effectively plan for the breakdown of security in the aftermath of the invasion. This failure stemmed in part from the inability or unwillingness to consider dissenting views from within the military establishment. The administration ignored and blocked contrarian perspectives from senior military leaders and also purposely sought out and installed military advisors who held, or at least expressed, views similar to those of the administration. The effects on strategic decision-making were felt not long after the US invaded Iraq.

Of course there is no way to tell whether or not the US could have avoided or prevented an insurgency in Iraq following the invasion. Wars rarely go as planned, even with the best planning. But the administration could have been quicker to recognize and adjust to strategic realities that proved different from expectations. By the time of the Iraq War, the administration had instilled a civil-military climate that was unwelcoming of ideas that did not conform to established preferences and pre-conceived notions. Accordingly, the administration was slow to recognize, accept and respond not only to the growing insurgency but also to alternative approaches to addressing the insurgency.

Conclusion

We will maintain the trust and confidence of our elected leaders.... civilian control of the military remains a core principle of our Republic and we will preserve it. We will remain an apolitical institution and sustain this position at all costs.
- United States National Military Strategy, 2011

I'm neither intimidated by our military, nor am I thinking that they're somehow trying to undermine my role as commander in chief.
– President Barack Obama

This thesis examined the effects of US civil-military relations on the 2003 US-led Iraq invasion and its aftermath. The analysis and findings suggest that many of the problems the United States encountered after early successes in Iraq stemmed from a dysfunctional interaction between civilian and military leaders. In particular, US failures in the aftermath of the 2003 invasion were largely due to the Bush administration's inability to comprehend the value of dissenting ideas and opposing perspectives emanating from the military establishment. US civil-military relations often looked more like an unbalanced monologue than an unequal dialogue.

Civil-military relations can have a profound effect on strategic decision-making; and according to Cohen, unequal dialogue serves as the benchmark of effective civil-military relations during times of war.

In this sense, Cohen is right. The statesman's job is to be intrusive, probing and questioning the military's thinking on strategy, plans, technological developments and even tactics. However, the statesman must also act with a level of prudence, keeping his eye on the political end state and ensuring that his intrusive actions are congruent with overall political objectives. In addition, the statesman must encourage open debate between civilian and military leadership, and

carefully weigh dissenting views from military leaders, particularly dissenting views related to strategic-level matters. Ultimately, it is the statesman's responsibility to instill a civil-military climate that facilitates both tenets of the unequal dialogue.

But Cohen is also wrong in how he characterizes the unequal dialogue in the lead up to and in the early stages of the Iraq War. Again, Cohen argues that Rumsfeld properly employed the tenets of unequal dialogue and is thus comparable to great wartime leaders of the likes of Lincoln and Churchill. It is true that the administration was quite adept at being intrusive in military affairs. Rumsfeld's approach, in particular, was consistent with the first part of Cohen's theory. But the administration as a whole was less successful at encouraging and accounting for opposing views from within the military establishment. The result was less than ideal strategic decision-making and strategic planning.

Rumsfeld's actions in a sense resembled those of a symphony conductor. It was as if Rumsfeld was conducting a symphony of dependent, uncritical thinkers simply reacting to his guidance. Everyone within the National Security Council seemingly moved at Rumsfeld's pace and to his liking. Playing a melody that was not in line with the conductor's tempo could amount to political suicide or banishment from the inner circle. This runs directly counter to Surowiecki's claim that "the best way for a group to be smart is for each member of the group to think and act as independently as possible."[1]

Independence of thought is important to intelligent decision making for two reasons. First it keeps the mistakes that people make from becoming correlated.[2] Errors in individual judgment will not wreck the group's collective judgment as long as those errors are not

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[1] James Surowiecki, *The Wisdom of Crowds,* (New York, NY: Anchor Books, 2005), 41.
[2] Surowiecki, 41.

systematically pointing in the same direction.[3] Second, independent individuals are more likely to have new information rather than the same old data with which everyone is already familiar. The smartest groups are made up of people with diverse perspectives who are able to stay independent of each other. The more influence we exert on each other, the more likely we will believe the same things and make the same mistakes.[4] Again, unequal dialogue between civilian and military leadership represents a means of exploiting the cognitive diversity inherent to crowd sourcing while at the same time maintaining the necessary hierarchy of civilian control.

Allison and Zelikow offer a useful perspective in describing how governmental politics consists of many actors who do not pursue a consistent set of strategic objectives but rather make decisions based on various conceptions of national, organizational, and personal goals.[5] Donald Rumsfeld entered his second term as the Defense Secretary with a personal agenda, to continue where he left off in the 1970's under President Ford's administration. The nascent Revolution in Military Affairs from the 1970s had morphed into defense transformation in 2003. For Rumsfeld, Iraq provided the opportunity to validate a specific strategic vision of what US forces should look like and how they should be employed. Unfortunately, this vision became dogma that ignored strategic realities and blocked strategic alternatives. Allison and Zelikow effectively characterize the result within the inner circle leading up to and in the early stages of the Iraq War: "In some groups, conformity pressures begin to dominate, the striving for unanimity fosters the

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[3] Surowiecki, 42.
[4] Surowiecki, 42.
[5] Grahm Allison and Philip Zelikow, *Essence of Decision: Explaining the Cuban Missile Crisis II edition,* (Reading, MA: Addison Wesley Educational Publishers Inc., 1999), 255.

pattern of defensive avoidance, with characteristic reliance on shared rationalizations that bolster the least objectionable alternative."[6]

Overall, Rumsfeld's actions undermined effective unequal dialogue with US military leadership, and the implications were certainly felt in Iraq. Better civil-military relations may not have prevented the breakdown of security and emergence of an insurgency following the initial success of the invasion; but better civil-military relations would probably have resulted in better strategy and more rapid and innovative responses to these emerging strategic challenges. Perhaps the most important lesson of this study is that the statesman must strive to instill a climate of civil-military relations conducive to unequal dialogue, and this must happen well before a war starts. Cohen proffers the theory of unequal dialogue as a prescription for effective wartime leadership. But by the time a war starts, it is likely too late, as climate is something that must be built and nurtured over time.

A Further Look: How Theory relates to Practice

Cohen frames unequal dialogue, a theoretical model of civil-military relations, in terms of the interactions between political and military leaders. In practice, however, there is rarely a clean distinction between civilian leadership on one side of a strategic debate and military leadership on the other side. Cohen's theory does not fully capture or account for this complexity. In 2002 and 2003, it was not just the civilian administration that was closed off to critiques of the United States' war plans. A number of senior military leaders also ignored dissenting views from within their own organizations. General Myers, Chairman of the JCS, and General Franks, CENTCOM Commander, for the most part advocated parallel views to those of Secretary Rumsfeld.

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[6] Allison and Zelikow, 284.

Therefore, it would be wrong to say that the administration ignored the military altogether. If the administration did, in fact, follow the advice of its senior military advisors, how can we blame it for not paying attention to different views from other military leaders? Political leadership should be put in the position of having to determine which military leaders it should listen to and which should be ignored.

But it is also difficult to determine whether these senior military advisors truly believed in Rumsfeld's approach to Iraq or whether they fell in line out of fear of punishment as Peter Feaver's application of Agency Theory might suggest.   With the former, Myers and Franks are at fault for being too dogmatic and not listening to their subordinates. With the latter, Myers and Franks are at fault for being too conciliatory and passive in dealing with civilian leadership. Either way, these military leaders were equally responsible for the breakdown of effective unequal dialogue. And civilian leadership remains culpable for hand-picking military advisors either with pre-existing views similar to those of the administration or who were perceived as being easy to control; and the administration also remains culpable for creating a civil-military climate in which military leaders perceive that advancement hinges upon toeing the party line.

Even if employed the right way, though, unequal dialogue is not a panacea. It does not promise civil-relations that are congenial or conflict-free. In practice, unequal dialogue will almost always be messy and contentious. And it can even be the source of civil-military conflict that would not have existed otherwise. Cohen highlights this aspect by illustrating President Lincoln's challenging and often tiring moments during interactions with his generals in the Civil War. However, the desired outcome of unequal dialogue is not harmony but instead better strategy.

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